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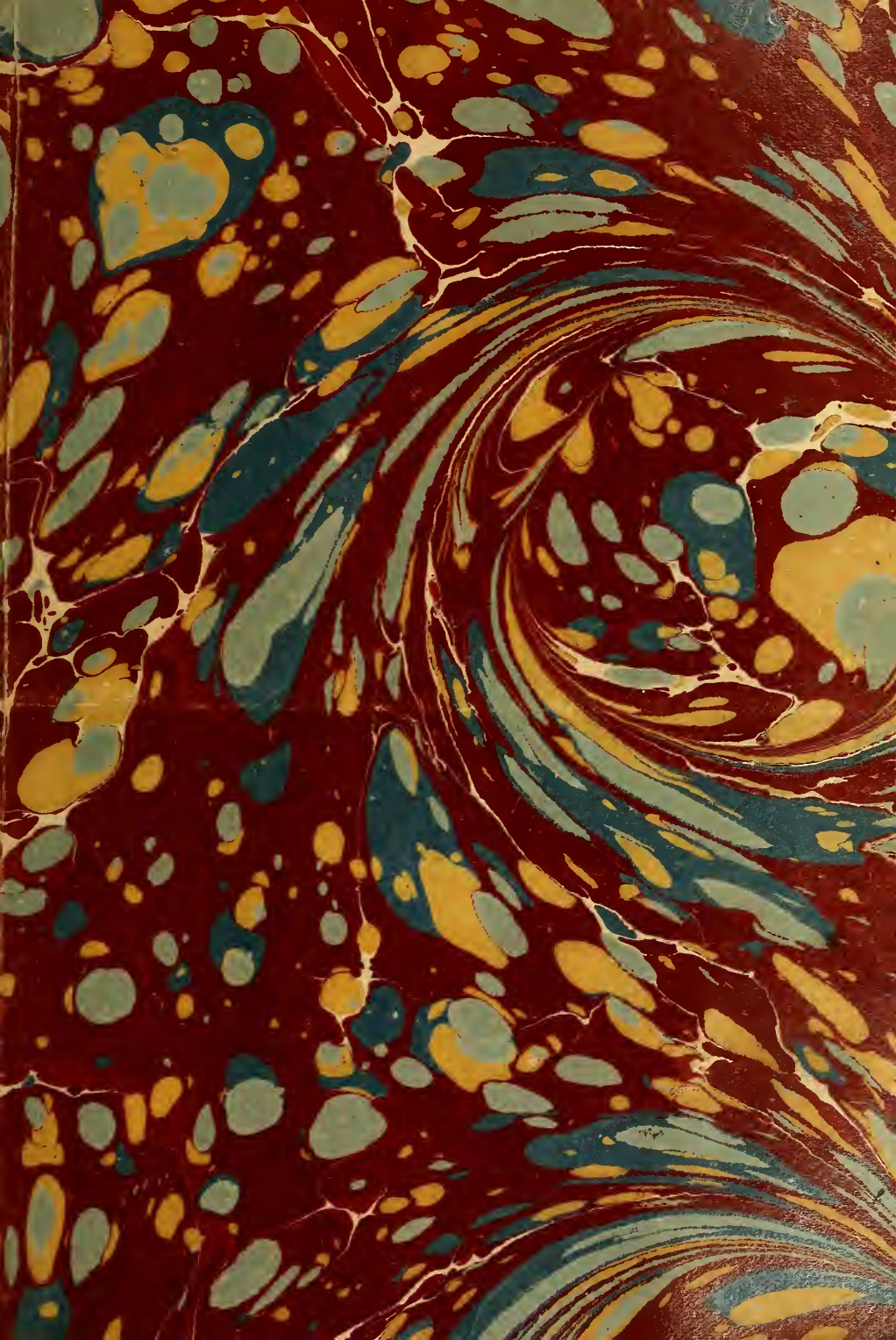


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THE FIRE OF LONDON :

OR

WHICH IS WHICH?

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS.

BY

LADY GEORGIANA FULLERTON.



LONDON :
BURNS, OATES, AND COMPANY,
Portman Street and Paternoster Row.



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THE FIRE OF LONDON.

Personages.

Lady DAVENANT.
Mrs. YATES.
Mrs. COGGLE.
JOAN PORTER, *Mrs. Coggle's Servant.*
Mrs. PETERKIN, } *Neighbours of Mrs. Coggle.*
Mrs. RUDGE, }
Two Babies.
ROSE DAVENANT, *alias MARY YATES,* }
FANNY MARCHBANKS, } *School Girls.*
JANE CALDWELL, }
ANN DAWSON, }
BESSIE FAIRCHILD. }
Mrs. DIMPLE, *Schoolmistress.*

ACT I.

SCENE. *A room in a house in Southwark, near Westminster Bridge, in the year 1666.*

SCENE I. MRS. COGGLE, JOAN PORTER.

Mrs. COGGLE *is discovered sitting working at a table; JOAN, who has just come in, is taking off her bonnet and shaking a huge umbrella.*

Mrs. Coggle. I say, Joan, is it raining to-night?

Joan. Cats and dogs, ma'am.

Mrs. Coggle. Well, now, if that is not provoking! when I had set my heart upon calling at Mrs. Yates's for to see her sweet little baby, which was born three weeks ago.

Joan. Laws, ma'am ! what's the use of running after babies? You will only catch the rheumatics, and the Lord knows what besides. Babies are born every day in the year. I am sure they are as plentiful as blackberries. I'd not go out of my way to see one, if you'd pay me for it.

Mrs. Coggle. But then you know, Joan, besides the baby, there's the supper. Mrs. Biddle, the housekeeper, always has something nice served up for me when I calls, and Mrs. Yates sends me a glass of wine.

Joan. O, as to that, ma'am, I says nothing against Mrs. Biddle and her suppers, nor Mrs. Yates and her wine. It is only babies as I calls fudge.

Mrs. Coggle. Well, now, Joan, I likes them little creatures; they be so innocent.

Joan. I am not so certain of that, ma'am. They screams awful when you contradicts them.

Mrs. Coggle. For shame, Joan. To hear you talk, one would think you had never been a baby yourself.

Joan. And who says I was? There's none I knows of as can prove it. Anyways, I do not recollect about it. Do you remember your own self being a baby, ma'am?

Mrs. Coggle. Of course I do. That is, I remember it when I looks at that picture over the chimney of me sitting on my mother's knee, which was painted in the late king's reign.

Joan. Law, you don't go for to tell me, ma'am, that was you ! To think I should have lived with you so long and never know'd it ! You, that pink-cheeked wench with a rose in her hand ! Dear me, dear me, who'd ever have thought it ! she is so pretty.

Mrs. Coggle. Humph, that's not an over civil speech of yours, Joan. Where's the wonder, I should like to know? Grown people can be handsome, though not pink-faced, like babies.

Joan. Yes, indeed, ma'am. Handsome is as handsome does. And you does very handsome things sometimes. That patch-work quilt on the bed there, for one. Mrs. Dimple says it is the handsomest piece of work she has ever seen.

Mrs. Coggle. Well, now, Joan, I should like to know once for all—Be you a fool or be you not?

Joan. You knows best, ma'am. I have lived with you so long.

Mrs. Coggle. I cannot go for to make up my mind.

Joan. Nor I, ma'am, long as I have lived with myself. You sees, ma'am, wise people be sometimes so like fools, and fools so like wise people, there's no telling between them.

Mrs. Coggle. What do you know about wise people?

Joan. Laws, ma'am, does not I know you?

Mrs. Coggle. Then am I like a fool, you silly creature?

Joan. O dear, dear, I never thought of that; but 'ceptions makes the rule, I have heard say.

Mrs. Coggle. Now, what do you mean by that?

Joan. That you're the 'ception, ma'am, and I'm the rule.

Mrs. Coggle. Come, now, you had best hold your tongue and mind your work. You will always be talking.

[*A moment's silence.*]

Mrs. Coggle. I am often that bored, I'd like something to happen.

Joan. To you or to me, ma'am?

Mrs. Coggle. Not to any one in particular, you goose.

Joan. What, to every one at once, ma'am? That would be worse, I takes it; for then there'd be nobody as could help anybody.

Mrs. Coggle. Didn't I tell you to hold your tongue?

Joan. Yes, ma'am, but that was before you wanted something to happen. Dear me, it's getting very dark. I can't see for to thread my needle. I must go to the window. O, my goodness! look, ma'am, look. If there's not something happening now! on t'other side the river. O Lord, what a red light! Mercy on us, what a blaze! O, what a frightful fire!

Mrs. Coggle [*going to the window*]. O, Joan, Joan! what shall we do? It is dreadful! Get me some brandy—I shall faint. Run and pack up my clothes. Where are the keys? We shall be burnt in our beds.

Joan. No, ma'am. We won't get into our beds, and then we can't anyways be burnt in them. But, bless your soul, don't pull your cap off—your wig will come off too. There's the river between us and the fire, it can't hurt us if we sit still. But see, the people are getting into boats, and some, I declare, are swimming over to this side. List how they scream! My goodness, all London will be burnt.

SCENE II.—*Mrs. COGGLE, JOAN, Mrs. PETERKIN, Mrs. RUDGE.*

Mrs. Peterkin. Neighbour, neighbour!

Mrs. Rudge. O, Mrs. Coggle, Mrs. Coggle!

Mrs. Peterkin. What are you made of, ma'am, that you can stand still at this here window, and London a-burning all the time?

Mrs. Coggle. There, now, that's just what I say. I wanted to run out, but that stupid Joan prevented me. Who ever heard of such a thing as staying at home and London burning? Give me my cloak, Joan.

Joan. No, ma'am, you shan't stir, not leastways till the Thames catches fire. Now, do you sit down like a sensible Christian woman, and let other folks make fools of themselves if they pleases. Much good it will do the poor creatures yonder if you gets yourself crushed to death in the crowd.

Mrs. Peterkin. You have no feelings, Joan.

Joan. I've a feeling, Mrs. Peterkin, that I'd like to see you mind your own business, and leave my missus alone.

Mrs. Rudge. O, what a horrid crash! The flames mount up as high as the sky. The river looks on fire. 'Tis like the day of judgment.

Joan. You'd best be saying your prayers, then. What's the good o' shrieking?

Mrs. Peterkin. I'll warrant you, ladies, it's the Papists have been and done it, I always said they'd burn us in our beds.

Mrs. Coggle. O dear, O dear! Joan says we mayn't go to bed no more. To think we should have come to that!

Joan. Never you mind what they says, missus. Lord, you'll go to bed till you are tired of it, if you'll only sit still a bit. And you, ma'am [*she turns to Mrs. PETERKIN*], you'd as well keep a civil tongue in your head about Papists, and not go for to put about such big lies.

Mrs. Peterkin. O, my goodness—Mrs. Coggle, Mrs. Rudge, did you ever hear the likes of that?

Mrs. Coggle. No, I never did, Mrs. Peterkin.

Mrs. Rudge. Nor I neither, I'm sure. But I say, neighbour, I'm not going for to stop here. I'faith, this is a sight a body mayn't live to see twice in their lives. Come, neighbour, come. Let us run, run! [*Exeunt Mrs. PETERKIN and Mrs. RUDGE.*]

SCENE III.—Mrs. COGGLE, JOAN.

Joan. The silly creatures, there they go tearing across the bridge like two demented persons. Lack-a-day, ma'am, you'll not wish something for to happen again in a hurry, I hopes.

It is next door to a sin, I think. There falls another building! crash! crash! What fearful screams!

Mrs. Coggle. I am all in a tremble. O dear, there's somebody a-knocking at the door. There again. Joan, Joan, quick, go and see who it is.

Enter Mrs. YATES, with a Baby in her arms.

Mrs. Coggle. Lord, Mrs. Yates, is that you? Good gracious, how pale you looks!

Mrs. Yates. I am so faint.

Mrs. Coggle. Here, here, Joan, a chair. Fetch some water.

Joan. A sip of wine should be better. Here, look in the cupboard. There's the cowslip wine your sister sent you.

Mrs. Coggle. Drink a little of it, ma'am, and let me hold the baby. What a sweet lamb it is!

Mrs. Yates. Is not she a darling? How can I bear to part with her? It breaks my heart to think of it; yet I must; I must leave her. Will you do me the greatest kindness in the world, Mrs. Coggle? Will you take charge for a while of my poor little child?

Mrs. Coggle. Now, Mrs. Yates—all at once?

Mrs. Yates. Alas! I have no time to lose. I must leave London to-night, and I dare not take my baby with me.

Mrs. Coggle. And where be you going, my good lady?

Mrs. Yates. To France, with my husband. The dreadful fire which has been raging for some hours is already said to be the work of Papists. This calumny is spread in every direction, and to-morrow noted Catholics will be in danger of their lives. Mr. Yates has a bitter enemy in one of his own family, who has been watching a long time for an opportunity of denouncing him, in order that he may succeed to his property. He will, no doubt, endeavour to take advantage of this false report and get him arrested. Indeed, we have just been secretly informed that this is his intention. If my poor husband, who is already very ill, should be thrown into prison, he will not long survive. There is a friendly captain who can take us on board to-night, and convey us to France. George is waiting for me in a boat, which will carry us to his ship at the entrance of the river. But my poor little baby, how could she live through such a voyage? She is so delicate that I have been obliged to bring her up by hand.

Mrs. Coggle. Poor dear lamb! she *is* a wee thing to go

tossing about the world. The night-air would be like to kill her.

Mrs. Yates. Then, will you take care of my Mary, Mrs. Coggle? I know you love children.

Mrs. Coggle. O, yes, I does, ma'am. And though Joan dislikes babies, and calls them fudge, she is a good soul at bottom, and will be kind to little miss. Won't you, Joan?

Mrs. Yates [*looking at Joan*]. I am sure she looks as if she could love a child.

Joan. I don't know what I looks like, ma'am, but I know what I feels like for a poor mother as must leave her child.

[*JOAN wipes her eyes.*]

Mrs. Yates. Dear Joan! Mrs. Coggle, here are five pounds to begin with, and when I arrive in France, where we have relatives, I shall send you some more money. You will often hear from me during my absence. And then the happy day will come at last, when I can fetch away my little Mary, and never part with her again. Now, I am afraid I must go. It is getting late. My husband must be counting the minutes till I return.

Mrs. Coggle. Eat something first, my good lady. This bit of cake, and drink a little more wine.

Joan. Yes, ma'am, do. It'll cheer you up a bit.

Mrs. Yates. Thank you, my good friends; my heart is too full. I cannot eat and drink. But give me my baby. Let me hold her once more in my arms, and give her a parting kiss. O, my own, dear, dear, little darling! may God and His holy Mother protect you! I should have liked, Mrs. Coggle, to have hung this chain and cross round her neck, but I fear it might bring you into trouble. Will you put it by for Mary, and when she begins to take notice, sometimes show it to her.

Mrs. Coggle. I am afraid to keep such a thing in my house, Mrs. Yates, now that the times are like to be troublesome.

[*Mrs. YATES sighs, and hides the cross in her dress.*]

Joan. Give it to me, ma'am; I'll take care of it, and it won't do no harm to nobody.

Mrs. Yates. O, but if it was to get you into difficulties—

Joan. Never you mind, ma'am. Hist! a word with you. [*She draws Mrs. YATES aside*]. Is the baby baptised?

Mrs. Yates. O, yes.

Joan. By a real downright Catholic priest?

Mrs. Yates. Yes, yes. Are you a Catholic?

Joan. Of course I am. I should like to see Joan Porter be anything else!

Mrs. Yates. This is indeed a blessing. Now I can go in peace. God has heard my prayers. If I were to die, Joan, you would see that my child was brought up in my own faith?

Joan. Well, as to the bringing up of her, that's more as I can engage for; them as should have their way in this world does not always get it, I'm thinking. But if you dies, and baby lives, and Joan lives, she shall see this here cross and hear of the blessed Catholic faith from me.

Mrs. Yates. God bless you, Joan—God bless you! Good-bye, good Mrs. Coggle. And now, one more kiss, my little Mary; one more look at your sweet face. If I did not know that our blessed Lady will be a mother to you, my heart would break. There, there!—take her, Mrs. Coggle. I must not stay another minute. [Exit Mrs. YATES.]

SCENE IV.—Mrs. COGGLE, JOAN.

Mrs. Coggle dandles the Baby, and Joan opens a parcel of baby clothes, which Mrs. YATES has left on the table.

Joan. There, ma'am, get it off to sleep—so—so—sing to it a bit.

Mrs. Coggle [sings]—

'See saw,
Margery Daw,
The old hen flew over the malt-house.
She counted her chickens one by one,
Still she missed the little white one;
And this is it, this is it, this is it.'

She is asleep now.

Joan [folding the clothes]. Well, if this be not a world full of troubles! I declare, it's like cats; the older it gets, the wickeder it grows.

Mrs. Coggle [rocking the Baby on her knee]. I don't see that it's so bad a world as all that comes to. I knows some as have nothing to complain of in it.

Joan. Bless you, ma'am, it would be a very good world if He as made it had His own way, and folks would do as He bids them; but I'm speaking of what people makes it by their wickedness.

Mrs. Coggle. Why, there's Lady Davenant, Miss Rose Mor-

dant as was ; she is as happy as the day is long, with her fine house and her coach-and-four ; and such a lot of dresses, she could put a new one on every day in the week.

Joan. Well, that's a queer notion of happiness to my mind, and not what I should care for at all. The bother it would be, to have to order one's coach each time one had a mind to walk ; and to eat one's victuals as fine folk do, with half-a-dozen men a-staring at one ! And as to the gowns . . . But, laws me ! talking of gowns, give me that baby, I'll just undress it, and fix it in my bed between two pillows, so that it can't tumble out. And do you, ma'am, make pap for it against it wakes.

[Exit Joan and Baby.]

Mrs. Coggle [alone]. Well, we never knows what a day brings forth ! I'll lock up this money, and then get some milk warmed for the poor little lamb. *[She puts the saucepan on the fire.]* Dear me, dear me, to think that I was talking of Mrs. Biddle's suppers, and this here thing should happen. *[She goes to the window.]* O my, how the fire is increasing ! What a shocking thing a fire is ! How many poor creatures must be dead or dying in those flames ! There they go, flaring and burning, as if nothing would never put them out ! *[A knock at the door.]* Who's there ?

A Voice [outside]. A neighbour—quick, quick, open ! *[Knocks again.]*

Mrs. Coggle. I'm a-coming, I'm a-coming. Whoever you be, don't flurry me so. *[She opens the door.]* What, bless my soul ! you again, Mrs. Peterkin ! What's the matter now ?

Enter Mrs. PETERKIN, with a Baby in her arms covered up in a shawl.

Mrs. Peterkin. Look here, Mrs. Coggle, I've brought you a baby.

Mrs. Coggle. A baby ! Lord bless you, we have got one already. We does not want any more.

Mrs. Peterkin. O but, whatever comes of it, you must take this one in to-night.

Mrs. Coggle. Whose is it ?

Mrs. Peterkin. Nobody's as I knows of yet.

Mrs. Coggle. Where does it come from ?

Mrs. Peterkin. From t'other side of the river. That's all I can tell at present. My son John was standing near a great

house—he is always a-standing somewhere—and the house was on fire. He looks up at a window, and a man appears there and cries out, ‘ Hold out your arms—there’s nothing but flames behind me—catch this child ! ’ and straightway he drops it into John’s hands, who, like a fool, runs away with it till he meets me: ‘ There,’ says he, ‘ I’m rid of it,’ and pops it into my arms with nothing but this bit of shawl on, and before I can turn round, he is off again to the fire. And now, Mrs. Coggle, you knows about babies, and I don’t. If you are a Christian woman, you’ll take this one in to-night, and to-morrow, I’ll warrant you, its friends will come for it, and give you a handsome sum for your trouble.

Mrs. Coggle. But if it has no friends, and nobody comes for to fetch it ?

Mrs. Peterkin. Did not I tell you it tumbled out of the window of a big house ? Besides, if the worst comes to the worst, it can go to the Workhouse or the Foundling Hospital. There now, take it like a good woman ; I can’t stay. [*She puts the Baby down on an armchair.*] Good-night, good-night, Mrs. Coggle.

Mrs. Coggle. But, I say, Mrs. Peterkin—Mrs. Peterkin, I say—She won’t stop—She is a neat article for to go and leave this baby on my hands ! What will Joan say ? O, it is beginning to cry ! Joan ! Joan !

Joan. Here, ma’am, is the pap ready ?

Mrs. Coggle. The pap, indeed ! Here’s another baby !

Joan. Lord save us ! That’s rather too much of a good thing. Enough’s as good as a feast. In the name of patience, where did you get it, ma’am ? It is as like the other as two peas.

Mrs. Coggle. The widow Peterkin brought it—a man threw it out of the window of a house on fire.

Joan. Law, what a curious thing ! and it is as cold as a stone. The fire might have done so much as to keep it warm, I think. I’ll put on it one of Mrs. Yates’s baby’s shifts, and lay it beside her in the bed. They’ll be as snug as two little birds in a nest.

Mrs. Coggle. And I’ll bring the pap when it is ready. O dear, if all this is not enough to confuse a poor body. What a day it has been ! My head is whirling round and round like a teetotum, and I don’t know if I stand on my head or my heels !

ACT II.

The same room as before.

SCENE I.

Mrs. Coggle [*alone, with a Child two years of age on her knees*]. Well, I wish Joan would not go out ! I could have sent somebody else to see about poor little Missy's coffin. Dear me, dear me ! how quickly she went off in those convulsions ! I hope this chickabiddy will not die too. You won't, will you, pussy ? No, no, you are a strong, hearty little puss. Sleeps like a top, and eats like a Turk ; but so did poor Missy till she was took with those fits. Dear, dear, it's hard to have to bury one child and support another, and all the time not to know which is dead and which is alive. Joan would always have it this is Mrs. Yates's child, but I don't believe a word of it. I say this is the child Mrs. Peterkin brought from the fire. The quarrels we have had about these children ! What fools we were not to tie a bit o' tape or something on their arms that blessed night for to know them one from t'other ! But we just lays them together in the same bed, each with one of Mrs. Yates's nightshifts on, and falls asleep ourselves. When they wakes we feeds them. One takes one, and t'other t'other, and never thinks which is which, till in the morning, 'This is Polly Yates,' says Joan. 'No,' says I, 'tis t'other Missy.' 'No,' says she. 'Yes,' say I. 'No, no ;' 'Yes, yes.' So we goes on like Punch and Judy, and never could agree. But Joan had the last word (she is a terrible one for that), and always calls this child Polly. O, yes, you knows the song, you little saucy puss—

' Polly put the kettle on,
 Polly put the kettle on,
 Polly put the kettle on,
 And let us drink tea.

Sukey take it off again,
 Sukey take it off again,
 Sukey take it off again,
 It will all boil away.

Blow the fire, make the toast,
 Put the muffins down to roast,
 Blow the fire and make the toast,
 We'll all have tea.'

Well, where I am to get the money to go on with, I am sure I don't know. They say poor Mr. and Mrs. Yates was drowned crossing the sea, so I am not like to have any from them ; and

as to this child, which Joan will have it is not herself, but I says she is, *her* friends will never turn up, I take it. All is so dear now. Times are hard, and folks get old. Hilloa there! who's knocking? come in, whoever you are.

Mrs. COGGLE *gets up, and puts the little Girl on the floor.*

SCENE II.—Mrs. COGGLE, Lady DAVENANT.

Lady Davenant. How do you do, Mrs. Coggle? Have you quite forgotten me?

Mrs. Coggle. Why, no, ma'am; I seems to remember your face, but I can't just call your name to mind.

Lady Davenant. Don't you recollect Rose Mordant?

Mrs. Coggle. Lady Davenant! is it possible? I beg your ladyship's pardon; I hope I see you well and happy.

Lady Davenant. Pretty well in health, thank you, but far from happy.

Mrs. Coggle. Ah, I remember now; you lost your husband, my lady, the night of the great fire.

Lady Davenant. And my baby also. Everybody thought she had been burnt to death at the same time as her father, who had rushed into the nursery to try and save her, and perished in the flames. I never doubted she was dead, and went abroad with my uncle, who is a great invalid. He lives in the south of France, and requires my constant care; but having come the other day to England on some business of his, I met at Dover with a person of the name of Peterkin. . . .

Mrs. Coggle. Law, you don't say so! We've been a wond'ring what was become of her.

Lady Davenant. It is true, then, that you know her?

Mrs. Coggle. Know her! I should think so. She brought that child here on the night of the fire.

Lady Davenant. *That* child! O, let me see her! Call her. Is this—is this really the child that woman's son caught in his arms when Davenant House was burnt down?

[*She takes the little Girl on her lap.*

Mrs. Coggle. We never heard the name of the house; but she said it was a large one that stood between the bridge and the corner of the street. [*She goes to a cupboard, and comes back with a shawl in her hand.*] Here is the shawl she was wrapt in that night.

Lady Davenant. *This* shawl! O, do I not know it again! I wore it for the last time on the morning of that terrible day.

It was a present from my poor husband. There can be no doubt at all, then, that this is my child—my little Rose.

Mrs. Coggle. No doubt in the world, *I* thinks, ma'am. [*Aside*] I don't care what Joan thinks.

Lady Davenant [*caressing the child*]. My sweet child! my pretty little Rose! She is really very pretty. Kiss me, darling; say, Mamma.

Mrs. Coggle. She is too shy, my lady. She has not been used to strangers.

Lady Davenant. O that her mother should be a stranger to her! And the worst of it is, that I do not possibly see how I can take her away with me. My uncle, Mr. William Davenant, cannot endure children; and I am afraid, Mrs. Coggle, that it will be very difficult to make him believe that this is my little Rose. He will be sure to say that there is not sufficient proof of it; and when once he has said something, no one dares to contradict him. He quarrelled with his sister's son, Mr. George Yates, because he married against his advice. This was lucky for me; for now he will leave me his fortune, though I am only his niece by marriage, if only I take care to do nothing to displease him. Perhaps in time I may persuade him that this is my little girl. Only he always suspects everybody. He will say there may very well be two shawls like this in the world, and that the whole thing is a plot.

Mrs. Coggle. A plot, indeed!

Lady Davenant. Mind, *I* don't say so. I have known you all my life, and though I might not have credited Mrs. Peterkin's story, I believe every word you say. And then, I could swear to this being my own shawl. Here is a bit of the fringe torn off. I perfectly remember catching it with a nail on the day before the fire. Perhaps in time I may induce Mr. Davenant to acknowledge Rose as his great-niece; and in any case, when it shall please God to remove him from this world, and he has left me his property, which he is sure to do if I don't offend him, I can then send for my child. In the meantime, how fortunate it is that she fell into your hands! You lived with my mother for so many years, that I have always looked upon you as a friend.

Mrs. Coggle. I am sure your ladyship is very good to say so.

Lady Davenant. It was very good of you to take such good care of Rose, when you did not know who she was, and no one paid for her support. I am obliged to leave London immedi-

ately, for Mr. Davenant can ill spare me even for a short time. I will write to you all my wishes about Rose.

Mrs. Coggle. I shall be sure to attend to them, my lady.

Lady Davenant. Here is 5*0*l. to begin with. I should like you to hire a nice cottage with a garden, somewhere near London. Will not Rosy like that? To run on the grass, and gather the sweet flowers! O, she is the prettiest little darling! You must get her some muslin frocks, and shoes with red ribbons. And mind you curl her hair very nicely. Good-bye, Mrs. Coggle. By the by, here is my direction. You must write to me, and tell me all about Rose, and the cottage, and if she looks well in her new frocks. One more kiss, my darling.
[*Exit* Lady DAVENANT.]

SCENE. III.—*Mrs. COGGLE alone, with the Child.*

Mrs. Coggle. What will Joan say, I wonder? Why, what business has she to say anything? She is only my servant. I always said this was not Polly. There, my dear—take your doll. Go and play by yourself. I am sure, whoever she is, it is best she should have a living mother, and one as can provide for her. And a cottage in the country too, and smart frocks and pink bows? Why, Missy has been born with a silver spoon in her mouth, after all! But what will Joan say? Bother what she says! I don't care. There! I declare she is coming! I am all in a tremble! What a silly creature I am! She is only my servant.

Enter JOAN.

Joan. Well, poor little Missy will be buried to-morrow. Cheer up, ma'am! It's all for the best. We won't grieve for her. Thank God, we had her conditionally baptised, and her sweet little soul is gone straight to heaven. So don't you look sad. One child's enough for old folks like us to bring up. Come here, Polly; kiss Joan.

Mrs. Coggle. She ain't Polly. You must call her Rose—Miss Rose Davenant.

Joan. And that's what I won't do, ma'am. She is Polly, and I'll not call her anything else, if I was to die for it.

Mrs. Coggle. Then hold your tongue, that's all. If you will be a fool, I can't help it. Lady Davenant has been here, and Polly is her child.

Joan. She ain't.

Mrs. Coggle. Why, the minute she saw that shawl, she knew it again !

Joan. That's not impossible. I never said the child as is dead was not hers, nor that there shawl neither. And she may have the shawl if she likes, and the poor little corpse upstairs ; but this live child she shall never have if I can help it. Did you tell her, ma'am, two children were brought here the same night ?

Mrs. Coggle. Now you mind your own business, Joan ! I says what I chooses.

Joan. I dare say you does, ma'am. But Polly's Polly, for all that !

Mrs. Coggle. Lady Davenant's husband threw the baby out of the window before he was suffocated by the flames.

Joan. But Polly was brought here by her mother, and she has the first right to her.

Mrs. Coggle. If you mean Mrs. Yates, she is dead.

Joan. I don't know that she *is* dead. But if it hath pleased the Lord to take her, more's the reason not to give her child to them as won't bring her up in her own faith. Them Davenants ain't Catholics.

Mrs. Coggle. It's no use talking. I tell you this is Lady Davenant's child, and it is against the law to be talking of the Catholic religion. The neighbours will hear you. Here is a lot of money which Polly's—I mean, Miss Rose's—mother has given me, and I am going to hire a cottage, and to buy a sight of things for the little lady. Do you mind her now, whilst I steps over to my cousin, who knows a man as lets cottages at Clapham and Battersea Rise. [Exit Mrs. COGGLE.]

SCENE IV.—JOAN and the Child.

Joan. For any one to go for to tell me you be not Polly Yates ! Why, my pet, you be as like your mother as a lamb is to a sheep ! I'd know you all the world over for her child. Them great eyes of yours seem just taken out of her face, and popped into yours. Mistress may do as she pleases—get a cottage, and buy you finery too, if she likes, with the lady's money. She may call Polly Rose, if her conscience will let her, but mine won't, that's all ! You shall always hear from Joan of your true mother, my pet, and of your Catholic baptism, and you shall kiss this here cross night and morning.

Look, Polly, here's mother's cross. O, you wants to kiss it now, does you? There's a dear, so you shall! And now sit down on the floor with your doll, whilst I cuts this frock out. [*She sits down at the table, and the Child on the floor.*] What is Joan to sing? Well, she will, if Polly will be quiet.

JOAN *sings*—

'O Polly, wilt thou gang with me?
The flaunting lady cries.—
But Polly turns her head away,
And from the lady flies.

O Polly, wilt thou be my child,
O wilt thou be my Rose?—
But Polly turns her head away,
And from the lady goes.

O Polly, wilt thou be my child,
And in my garden play?—
But Polly shakes her head, and says,
Nay, nay, good lady, nay.

I cannot, cannot be your Rose,
I'm mother's Polly dear;
I'll never, never be your child—
I'll wait for mother here.

I'll kiss her cross. I'll say her prayers,
The very, very same.
I am a little Catholic,
And Mary is my name.'

Joan. There, now, you teach Dolly to sing that, Miss Polly. Ah! a knock! Come in! [*Another gentle knock.*] Come in, I says! Folks are so queer! They expects you to open the door for them, as if it had a handle only on one side. What's the use to bawl 'Come in!' if they won't come in?

[*She opens the door.*]

SCENE V.—*Mrs. YATES with her veil down, JOAN, the Child.*

Mrs. Yates. Joan, dear Joan, is that you?

Joan. Yes, it's me; but who may you be?

Mrs. Yates [*putting up her veil and looking anxiously about her*]. Is there nobody else here? Thank God you are alone. [*Perceives the Child.*] O, is that my child, my Mary? [*Snatches up the Child in her arms and kisses her.*]

Joan. Mrs. Yates, as I'm alive! Didn't I say you wasn't dead? Yes, yes, that's Polly; no need for to tell you, I see.

Mrs. Yates [*looking into the Child's face*]. No, indeed. She

is the very image of her poor father. I never saw such a striking likeness.

Joan. All but the eyes, though; they be yours to a T. And is Mr. Yates come back too?

Mrs. Yates. Alas! dear Joan, he is dead. I lost him a few weeks ago in France. My sorrow has been almost more than I could bear; but God has helped me to carry my heavy cross, and given me strength to come and seek my child. I have brought enough money with me to pay for Mary's pension.

Joan. Folks said you and Mr. Yates had both been drowned.

Mrs. Yates. We were shipwrecked on the coast of Brittany, and lost the little we had. My husband was so ill that we were obliged to remain in a poor village near the sea, and the letters I wrote were, I dare say, lost. Sometimes I was too poor to pay the heavy postage. The cousin who denounced my husband as a Papist is now in possession of all his fortune. He sent me, however, a small sum after my poor George's death. Perhaps, by selling my jewels, which I left behind with a friend, I may have enough to support my child and myself; if not, I must work for my bread. I shall not mind that, if God gives me my health and strength. My darling Mary! she is just like what I expected—so fair, so gentle; she looks so good.

Joan. Yes, yes—she is tolerably good, as babies goes.

Child. Mother.

Mrs. Yates. O, did you hear her say mother? Darling!

Joan [*aside*]. I'll be bound she never said mother to that fine Lady Davenant.

Mrs. Yates. Did you keep the little cross?

Joan. Lord bless you! Was I not a-showing of it to her just now, and she a-kissing of it with her sweet lips! Here it is. [*Shows the cross.*]

Mrs. Yates. May God bless you, Joan! and good Mrs. Coggle too!

Joan [*aside*]. Well, I hopes He will, and that missus will not go for not to deserve it, which if she sticks out this is not Polly. . . . Well, well.

Mrs. Yates. I cannot tell you, Joan, how I have longed to see this child of mine. I will never, please God, part with her again.

Joan. Will you take her away with you now? Missus is out.

Mrs. Yates. Then, it would not be right for me to take away Mary without thanking Mrs. Coggle for all her good care of her. And besides that, I must first go and engage a room, which I have not yet done; and get a few things to make my little darling comfortable. I have also to go and find out a good priest, who is concealed in the city. Some of our friends in France have given me letters for him, which are of great consequence, and I must, if possible, deliver them to him in person. But I will leave this money with you; and this evening, or at the latest to-morrow morning, I will come to fetch home my little Mary. Will you tell Mrs. Coggle so? [*She stoops and caresses the Child.*]

Joan [*aside*]. That's the very thing I shan't do; Mistress had best be taken by surprise, and then before she has time to turn herself round, the real mother will carry off her child.—Mind you come back soon for Polly, Mrs. Yates.

Mrs. Yates. O, not an hour, not a minute longer than I can help will I delay it, Joan.

Joan. And don't you go for to poke too much after priests to-day, ma'am. I loves and reverences them; but it's no safe matter to carry them letters in these times.

Mrs. Yates. O, I am not afraid, Joan. Nobody knows me in London. [*She kisses the Child again.*]

Joan. Well now, you leave off a-kissing of that chick. You'll have plenty of time for it to-morrow. Just go and get your business done, and return as quick as you can.—[*Aside*] I wants her to go before mistress comes back.—There, there, God's blessing go with you. Let me open the door for you.

[*Exit Mrs. YATES.*]

SCENE VI.—*JOAN, the Child.*

Joan. Now, Polly, come to the kitchen. I'll give you your dinner, my pet. It may be for the last time. What, you don't want to leave your doll, don't you?

Child. No, dolly dine too.

Joan. Well, so she shall. I used to say I did not like babies; but they be so cunning, these little creatures, they makes us love them whether we wills or no. There's one gone to her home in heaven, and t'other a-going to her mother on earth. Ah, I thinks I am a baby myself, I feels so like crying at parting with them! But I'm glad all the same about Polly.

ACT III.

SCENE. *A room in Mrs. DIMPLE'S Boarding-school for Young Ladies.*

SCENE I.—FANNY MARCHBANKS, JANE CALDWELL, ANN DAWSON, BESSY FAIRCHILD, *sitting at work round a table.*

Fanny. I say, have you seen the huge parcel of cakes and sweets Emma Robson has just received from her aunt?

Jane. No; has she then? We shall all have a share, I hope.

Ann. Which girl has had most things sent her this time?

Fanny. O, Rose Davenant, of course. Her mother is always sending her lots of baked apples, and dried plums, and all manner of good stuff from France.

Jane. What a queer girl she is!

Bessie. Queer yourself, Jane. Rose is the nicest girl in the school.

Jane. Well, if she is not queer herself, it is a queer body comes to see her—that Joan Porter she thinks so much of. I declare she is not so pleased by one-half when her mother's box of presents comes as when Mistress Joan appears, with her huge cap and great umbrella.

Ann. The only time I saw Rose in a passion was when some of the girls mimicked the old lady, and said she was a figure of fun.

Fanny. She always goes for the holidays to one Mrs. Coggle at Clapham. I wonder her mamma, who seems so fond of her, does not send for her home to France.

Jane. Well, Bessie may say what she pleases, I do maintain there's something uncommon about that girl.

Bessie. I never said there wasn't, Jane. I think there is something uncommonly good and uncommonly nice about her. Don't you think so, Fanny?

Jane. O no, I am sure Fanny thinks her queer.

Fanny. Well, if it is queer to be always ready to do a kindness, or always to speak the truth, even when one may suffer for it, then I should say Rose was queer.

Ann. She is very good about not telling tales, and she will help one with one's lessons at a pinch.

Jane. But I'll tell you what I have found out.

Ann. What? Has she got into a scrape?

Jane. No; but she wears a cross hid in her dress, and puts it under her pillow at night. She'll catch it, if Mrs. Dimple finds her out. I have seen her kiss it too.

Fanny. That's what Catholics do, to kiss the cross. Do you think she is one?

Jane. Well, I don't know. The new parlour-maid says that that Joan Porter is a rank Papist.

Ann. Dear, you don't say so? I'll look hard at her the next time she comes. I wonder what Papists are like.

Fanny. Hush, hush! here is Rose.

SCENE II.—*The same.* ROSE.

Rose. Look here; I have just received this box of chocolate. Do all have some. [*She hands it round.*]

Bessie. You are keeping none for yourself.

Rose. O, I do not care about it. I am so glad you like it. How tired you look, Jane!

Jane. I have to finish this long strip of hemming before this evening; and I am such a slow worker, I am afraid I shall lose my walk to-day, and the girls are going to the copse to look for nuts.

Rose. Give it to me. I have finished my task. Mrs. Dimple will not mind my helping you a bit. I don't want to go out this afternoon.

Bessie [*aside to Jane*]. She is a queer girl, is she not?

Ann. Did this chocolate come from France, Rose?

Rose. Yes, like all the good things I get.

Fanny. It is capital stuff. If I were you, I should be dying to go to France. You have never seen your mother, have you?

Rose. When I was little I saw my mother.

Jane. Why don't you go home for the holidays?

[*ROSE looks vexed and lets her needle fall.*]

Bessie [*aside to Jane*]. Fie! Jane. You should not ask those sort of questions; you have no business to.

Jane. Mind your own business, and don't preach to me.

Bessie. I sha'n't let you plague Rose.

Rose [*aside to Bessie*]. Dear Bessie, nothing she can say plagues me so much as to see you put out.

Fanny. If I were you, Rose, I'd leave Jane to finish her own hemming. She does not deserve your kindness.

Jane. You began talking about her mother. I don't want her to finish my strip.

Rose. But I want to do it, dear Jane ; and I was wrong to look vexed just now. You did not mean to tease me. O, here is Mrs. Dimple.

SCENE III.—*The same.* MRS. DIMPLE.

Mrs. Dimple. Young ladies, those amongst you who have finished their tasks may put on their bonnets and tippets, and proceed to the copse. Ah ! Miss Davenant, you will have to stay behind, I see. This will teach you to be more diligent another time ; unless, indeed, [*she glances at JANE*] you are finishing the work of some idle girl in this room. I shall not allow this sort of thing to go on.

Rose. O, do please for this once, Mrs. Dimple.

Mrs. Dimple. Well, you are always such a good girl that I don't like to refuse you ; but there are some young ladies I am ashamed of.

Bessie. May I stay with Rose, ma'am ?

Mrs. Dimple. Yes, if you wish it. But if you stay at home you must work. [*She turns to the other girls.*] Now, young ladies, put up your scissors and thimbles ; hold up your heads, and follow me. [*Exeunt* MRS. DIMPLE, FANNY, ANN, and JANE.]

SCENE IV.—ROSE, BESSIE.

Bessie. I am glad we are alone. Have you seen Joan lately ?

Rose. No, not for a long time. I wish she would come, or write to me. She is not much of a scholar, Joan, and it takes her a deal of trouble, she says, to write a letter. You are the only person in the world, besides Joan, to whom I can speak of what I am always thinking of.

Bessie. You mean, your two mothers, and which is the real one ?

Rose. Yes ; it is so very strange to receive letters, and such kind ones too, from two different mothers, and not to know which is really my own.

Bessie. Mrs. Dimple always calls Lady Davenant your mother, and so does Mrs. Coggle.

Rose. Yes ; but Joan does not, and I am inclined to think she knows best.

Bessie. Which of your mothers has last written ?

Rose. Lady Davenant. She writes very often, and on fine thin paper which smells of perfume. She says I shall soon

live with her in a beautiful house with a lovely garden, and wear fine dresses, and go to plays and balls. I have heard but seldom from my other mother, Mrs. Yates. Only six or seven times since I have been at school, and her letters are written on coarse bits of paper and with a bad pen—the stump of one, I should think. This one, which was the last I received from her, I always carry about in my pocket.

Bessie. O, do read it to me, Rose.

Rose [reading]. ‘My dearest Mary,—I am hardly able to write at all at times, and cannot say what I would. May God bring us one day together! In the meantime learn, my precious one, to wait, to pray, and to suffer like your mother, if this should be His blessed will.’

Bessie. O, what a sad letter !

Rose. Well, it does not make me feel sad. I have shed many tears over it; but when I put it like this against my heart, it seems to make it burn with love of God.

Bessie. Where does she write from ?

Rose. The letter does not say ; but I will tell you, Bessie, a secret which Joan told me, but we must not mention a word about it here: Mrs. Yates is a Catholic, and in prison because she would not betray a priest to whom she had brought a letter. She was arrested with that letter upon her, Joan says, the very day she was coming to take me away from Mrs. Coggle’s house ten years ago.

Bessie. And has she been all that time shut up ?

Rose. Yes; but Joan, the last time I saw her, said she hoped she would soon be released.

Bessie. Well, my parents were Catholic, and so was I till they died, and my uncle sent me to this school. I have not forgotten what they taught me ; and when I leave this place, I shall try to practise my religion.

Rose. Joan taught me about the Catholic faith, and gave me this cross. It belonged to Mrs. Yates, she said.

Bessie. I say a ‘Hail Mary’ every day.

Rose. So do I ; and I make the sign of the cross when nobody is looking.

Bessie. You would be finely punished if Mrs. Dimple were to find you out. I was whipped when I first came here because I said I was a Catholic.

Rose. They might punish me as much as they pleased ; I would never say I was not one. But hush, here is Mrs. Dimple.

SCENE V.—*The same.* MRS. DIMPLE.

Mrs. Dimple. Miss Fairchild, take your work with you and go to the class-room. Lady Davenant is just arrived, and is coming to the parlour to see her daughter.

Bessie [*aside to Rose*]. O, Rose, what will you do?

Mrs. Dimple. Did not I request you to leave the room, Miss Fairchild? [*Exit BESSIE.*]

Rose. What, is Lady Davenant here? My . . . ?

Mrs. Dimple. Yes, your mother, my dear, and a finer lady and a kinder parent no one would wish to see. Mind you hold up your head, Miss Rose, and put your shoulders back, that your mamma may see you have been well brought up. Now, mind you behave in a becoming manner, and do credit to my school. What are you crying about? Why you ought to be the happiest girl in the world with so good a mother.

Rose. I am glad, very glad to see her.

[*Exit Mrs. DIMPLE.*]

SCENE VI.—ROSE, LADY DAVENANT.

Lady Davenant. Rose, Rose, where are you? O my daughter, my dear child, this is a happy moment!

Rose. Dear lady, how kind you are!

Lady Davenant. Lady! you must not call me lady, Rose. You must say mamma.

Rose. Dear mamma. [*Aside*] I am so glad she does not want me to say mother.

Lady Davenant. At last I hear that word from the lips of my child! I have so long looked forward to this day. I thought my poor uncle would never die; and I never could leave him during these many years—not even for a few days. He would then have left his fortune to somebody else, to a Mrs. Yates, they said, the widow of his nephew. [*ROSE (apart)*: Mrs. Yates, —dear, how strange!] Now he has bequeathed to me all his property; and I can take you, my child, to a delightful home, where you will have every sort of comfort and enjoy all sorts of pleasures. I see tears in your eyes, Rose. Are they tears of joy?

Rose. Dear mamma, you are so kind, more than kind; but I feel almost bewildered at this sudden change, and then I am not the sort of child I think you would like to have.

Lady Davenant. O, yes, my love. I like your looks very much; and when you are dressed according to my fancy—I mean as my friend Sir Peter Lely paints the beauties of the court—you will really be everything I could wish. You have very beautiful eyes, and I suppose you will brighten up soon, and be as glad to come home to your mother as I am to get back my child.

Rose. Dear mamma, do not think me ungrateful. I feel very much your kindness.

Lady Davenant. Always my kindness! I want you to smile and look happy. Are you sorry to leave your companions?

Rose. Yes; I love some of them very much.

Lady Davenant. Well, I suppose you will like to have time to take leave of them, and you must pack up all your little treasures. I will go and do some shopping, and pay a few visits to old friends. It is now two o'clock. Later in the afternoon I will come and fetch you in the carriage, and take you away with me. I think you will be quite astonished when you see the house you are going to live in. Good-bye, then, for the present, my love. Give me a kiss.

[*Exit* Lady DAVENANT.]

SCENE VII.

Rose [*alone*]. I do not know what to say, what to think, what to do. My head is in a whirl. O, is this lady my mother? or is it my real mother who wrote me this letter? [*Takes the letter out of her pocket and kisses it.*] All the time Lady Davenant was speaking to me about her fine house and all the pleasures I am to have, the words of Joan's old song when I was a baby kept ringing in my ears :

'I'll kiss her cross, I'll say her prayers,
The very very same,
I am a little Catholic,
And Mary is my name.'

Ought I to go with Lady Davenant, and to say nothing about Mrs. Yates? Would it be right? How strange that there should be some connection between them! It will be very pleasant to live with so kind a lady in such a fine house; but somehow I cannot feel as if she were my mother. Yet Mrs. Coggle and Mrs. Dimple say she is. I suppose I must take it for granted, and not mind what Joan thinks. But then how

ever am I to be a Catholic, if I am Lady Davenant's daughter? I wonder what Bessie would advise me to do.

SCENE VIII.—Mrs. DIMPLE, ROSE, Mrs. YATES.

Mrs. DIMPLE *comes in first*, Mrs. YATES *stays near the door*.

Mrs. Dimple. Miss Davenant, here is a person who wants to speak to you. She says she comes from your mother. I suppose she is one of Lady Davenant's tradespeople.—Come in, ma'am, Miss Rose is here.—You will excuse me, my dear, I must go and see to the packing of your trunk.

[*Exit Mrs. DIMPLE.*]

Mrs. YATES *stands still a moment without speaking, looking at ROSE.*

Rose [timidly]. What do you want, ma'am?

Mrs. Yates. I want . . . my child.

Rose. Your child! One of the other girls?

Mrs. Yates. Are not *you* Mary Yates, whom they call here Rose Davenant? I am Mary Yates's mother.

Rose. You—you Mrs. Yates? You who wrote me this letter? Speak, tell me the truth. Are you really my mother?—are you certain of it?

Mrs. Yates. My child—my Mary! . . . [*She hides her face in her hands, and bursts into tears. ROSE hesitates for a moment, and then throws herself into her arms*].

Rose. O, mother, mother, bless your child!

Mrs. Yates. I do, I do, with all my heart.

Rose [drawing back]. Yes, I believe you are my mother. I wish to be your child; but you know Lady Davenant says I am her daughter.

Mrs. Yates. I know she does, but she has never been told the truth; and when she hears it, I think she will be convinced that her child died in infancy, and that you are mine.

Rose. Can you prove it?

Mrs. Yates. Only in one way. It will rest with her to admit it or not. But now, listen to me, my child. You will have to make your choice between two mothers. I cannot oblige you to follow me. I am a poor Catholic woman without fortune or friends. I have just come out of a prison, where I lingered for ten years because I would not reveal the abode of a priest and cause his death. Every one forgot me except poor Joan Porter. She never rested till at last, by means of a kind Protestant gentleman, my release was obtained. I have no

pleasant home to offer you—nothing but a poor garret, where we must both of us work for our bread. I cannot compel you to share this fate. If you are unwilling to do so, I will depart in silence and in sorrow, weeping and praying for you—

Rose. No, mother, no, don't leave me.

Mrs. Yates. If you are willing to cleave to me and embrace this poor and obscure life, I can promise you blessings which wealth can never give. In that poor little room we can serve God in a Catholic manner, we can lead the life our blessed Lord and His holy Mother led on earth, and when we die receive the kingdom promised to those who suffer persecution for justice' sake.

ROSE takes her cross out of her dress, fixes her eyes on it, and says,

' I am a little Catholic,
And Mary is my name.'

then hides her face in her hands, and remains silent.

Mrs. Yates. Lady Davenant, who claims you as her child, can take you to a fine house; she can give you rich dresses and earthly pleasures for a few years. But when this life is over, what will it avail you to have lived in wealth and pleasure? O, Mary, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Rose [*starting up*]. Mother, my mind is made up. Prove, if you can, to Lady Davenant that I am your child, and if she does not compel me to remain with her, gladly, readily will I go with you and share your poverty. If she and others will not believe you, if they will not listen to us, and I am forced to leave you, it will be but for a while. When I am old enough I will seek my true mother, and in the meantime her faith shall be my faith.

Mrs. Yates. Now I am happy. Now, come what may, I shall not lose my child. How like her father she looks at this moment! I can now bear any cross God may lay on me. Those blessed words of yours, my beloved child, will give me strength to endure everything. There is some one coming.

SCENE IX.—*The same.* LADY DAVENANT, MRS. DIMPLE,
Mrs. COGGLE, JOAN.

Lady Davenant. Rose darling, see whom I have brought with me. I called in the carriage for these old friends of yours,

thinking you would be glad to see them, and wish them good-bye before our departure.

Rose. O, dear Joan ! Dear Mrs. Coggle !

Lady Davenant. Mrs. Coggle is delighted to hear that you are coming home with me. As to that other good woman, I don't know what's the matter with her. She has done nothing but look daggers at me ever since I called at the cottage. Is she always so glum ? She never once opened her lips.

Joan. But she will open them now, Lady Davenant. That girl there whom you call Rose, but whose name is Polly, Polly Yates, is no more your daughter than I am. Only to look at her is enough. She is as like her own mother as two peas ; and she is no more like you than a pea is to a cauliflower. If you goes and takes her away now just as Mrs. Yates is a-coming out of prison, you are no better than the woman in the Bible which wanted to cut the child in two.

Lady Davenant. What *does* all this mean ? Is she mad ?

Mrs. Coggle. No, my lady, but next door to it on this point.

Joan. Next door, ma'am ! Well, now, I advises you not to say that again, ma'am ; for the next-door neighbours are not over civil as it is. But that's neither here nor there : that girl's Mary Yates, which we called Polly.

Mrs. Yates [*who has been standing back out of sight, now comes forward*]. Joan ! dear Joan !

Joan. You here ! Mrs. Yates, of all the fishes in the sea ! As I'm alive, they be right, and I'm daft. In the name of all the saints, what brings you here, just in the nick of time ?

Mrs. Yates. God's providence, I hope.

Lady Davenant. Mrs. Yates ! What Mrs. Yates ?

Mrs. Yates. Your uncle's niece, Lady Davenant.

Lady Davenant. What ! Mrs. George Yates ?

Mrs. Yates. Yes, the widow of your husband's cousin.

Lady Davenant. We have never met, and yet your face, your eyes ! I must have known somebody very like you.

Joan. Of course, you have.

Mrs. Yates. O my God, complete your gracious work ! [*She takes ROSE by the hand, and goes up to Lady DAVENANT*]. Lady Davenant, on the night which neither you nor I can ever forget—that of the fire of London—two infants were taken to Mrs. Coggle's house, and she and Joan took charge of them.

Lady Davenant. I never heard of any other child than mine having been left there. [*Turns to Mrs. COGGLE*].

Mrs. Coggle. Because the other died, my lady.

Joan. No, she didn't. This one died. Bother!—no. Which does I mean? Mrs. Yates's baby didn't die.

Mrs. Yates. In the hurry and confusion of that terrible night, they forgot to put some token on the children to distinguish them one from the other, and hence the strange situation in which we are now placed. One child died in infancy; this is the other. You have been led to believe she was your daughter. I am persuaded, Lady Davenant, that she is mine.

Lady Davenant [*agitated*]. Yours, Mrs. Yates! What proof of it can you allege? I saw the very shawl in which Rose was wrapped that night. I can swear it was mine.

Joan. We took it off your ladyship's child the moment she came in, and put both the babies into Mrs. Yates's night-shifts. Mistress knows this is true.

Lady Davenant. Good heavens! But then, how are we to discover the truth? This is dreadful.—Mrs. Coggle, had you ever any doubt that Rose—I mean, this child—was mine?

Mrs. Coggle. Not any for to speak of, my lady.

Joan. Come, mistress, you never was so sure of it as you pretended to be. I'll take my oath of that.

Lady Davenant. And will you take your oath that this girl is Mrs. Yates's daughter?

Joan. Well, I'm as sure of it as I stands here; but an oath's an oath, and I don't like absolute to swear.

Lady Davenant. But why, Mrs. Yates, have you not claimed this child before, if you have always believed her to be your daughter?

Mrs. Yates. For ten years, Lady Davenant, I have been in prison, and too friendless and poor to obtain a hearing.

Lady Davenant. In prison! On what account?

Mrs. Yates. For bringing a letter to a priest, and refusing to reveal his abode.

Lady Davenant [*aside*]. Alas! and I deterred my uncle from assisting her! O, this is sad—I who was once a Catholic! But this child—

Mrs. Yates. I have nothing but poverty to offer her. Think, Lady Davenant, if in my position I should wish to claim her, were she not mine—if I did not see in her face a likeness to my husband which none who knew him could mistake. Look at his picture. . . . See if you yourself do not perceive it.

Lady Davenant [*looks at the picture, then at ROSE, then at*

Mrs. YATES, *and again at ROSE*]. There is no denying it ! Her father's features !—her mother's eyes ! The evidence is irresistible. What a terrible disappointment ! But I cannot struggle against conviction.

Rose [*kissing her Mother*]. O mother, nothing can now part us ! [*She goes timidly towards Lady DAVENANT*]. Dear lady, how can I ever thank you enough for what you have done for me, when you thought I was your daughter ?

Lady Davenant. Have you no regrets for the brilliant position you lose ?

Rose. I am very sorry that I can no longer be dear to you ; that is the only thing that grieves me, for I shall always love you.

Lady Davenant. Your mother is poor.

Rose. Yes ; but then the Gospel says, 'Blessed are the poor.'

Lady Davenant. Mrs. Yates, I induced my uncle to disinherit your husband. I deterred him from providing for you after his death. I have cruelly wronged you. But you are now avenged. I lose the child I thought I possessed. Will you be generous ? Will you let me repair as far as I can the evil I have done ? If you and your daughter would come and live with me, I should not lose her altogether, and in you I should have a friend.

Mrs. Yates. Believe me, Lady Davenant, I feel your kindness. I would willingly accept it—but . . . you know I am a Catholic, and for us it is best to live in obscurity.

Lady Davenant. I was once a Catholic. O, come with that dear child, and teach me to be a good one.

Joan [*aside*]. Well, them as suffers for the faith works miracles they say, so perhaps Mrs. Yates can turn a fine lady into a good Christian.

Rose. Dearest mother, please do what Lady Davenant wishes. I then can call you mother, and her mamma.

Mrs. Yates. And if she likes it, we will call you Rose Mary.

Lady Davenant. O, yes, that will be charming, and she will have two mothers.

Bessie [*running in*]. Rose, Rose ! which is the real one ? tell me before you go' away.

Rose [*with one hand in Mrs. YATES'S, and the other in Lady DAVENANT'S*]. This is my dearest mother, and this my dear mamma. [*She whispers something to Lady DAVENANT, who turns to Mrs. DIMPLE and says*] I am going to write to Miss Fair-

child's uncle to ask him to let her spend her holidays with Rose Mary.

Bessie [*clapping her hands*]. O what a happy day!

Joan. Well, all's well as ends well, I suppose. But what a lot of trouble them children and them mothers have been to us! It has been all along of mistress wanting something to happen. But she is wiser now, and won't never do it again. After all, I thinks babies *are* fudge. They worrits us when they lives, and we misses them when they dies. But it is all been in my day's work, I suppose; and there's one comfort any ways, I was right, and mistress was wrong. I should not be one bit surprised though, if she goes on saying Mary's Rose.

Mrs. Yates. Well, let her, dear Joan. For we too may say that she is Mary's Rose, the Blessed Virgin's little flower.

[*Exeunt.*]

THE END.

